THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) The Government of India supplements the financial and logistic efforts of the State Governments. Financial assistance from Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) is given as per the recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission (EFC). The Government is expected to meet expenditure from the CRF for immediate relief to the victims of natural calamities *viz.* cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood and hailstorm.

As per the scheme of National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF), which is based on the recommendations of the EFC, financial assistance from NCCF is considered in the wake of a calamity of severe nature, taking into account the funds required for relief according to the norms laid down, and the funds available in CRF of the State Government, to which Government of India contributes 75%.

The CRF allocation to Himachal Pradesh for the year 2003-04 is Rs. 50.33 crore, out of which the Central share is Rs. 37.75 crore. The first installment of Central share of Rs. 18.875 crore, due for release on 1st May, 2003, has been released to the State Government by the Ministry of Finance for want of Utilisation Certificate. The entire Central share was released to the State for the years 2000-01 to 2002-03. For drought of 2002-03, financial assistance of Rs. 14.35 crores from NCCF and 0.10 Lakh MTs of foodgrains for relief employment were provided to the State.

Government of Himachal Pradesh has not so far submitted any memorandum during current financial year for financial assistance from NCCF.

Mission for Medicinal Plants

2100. SHRI R. KAMARAJ:
SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have initiated any ad-hoc mission for researching medicinal plants throughout India;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken any measure to check exploitation by foreigners who are visiting Indian in the name of research study and importing medicinal plants at a huge cost in the name of foreign origin; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has established National Research Centre for Medicinal & Aromatic Plants at Anand in Gujarat. The Centre is conducting research on all aspects of medicinal and aromatic plants. Multi-location and multi-disciplinary research is also conducted under All India Coordinated Research Project on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants having 11 centres located in State Agriculture Universities and ICAR Institutes. In addition, 8 ad-hoc projects are under operation at different centres of the ICAR.

(c) and (d) The Indian "Biological Diversity Act" of the Government of India has provisions to check exploitation of our genetic resources including medicinal plants by foreigners.

Growth of agriculture sector

2101. SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any meaningful growth in the agriculture sector is expected in 2003-04, if so, what is the basis therefor; and

(b) whether Central and State Government are contemplating fresh investments in the irrigation facilities to bring additional areas under agriculture and whether Government is considering crop diversification so as to make agriculture more remunerative for farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The favourable monsoon rainfall has boosted the prospects of higher growth in the agriculture sector in 2003-04. The rainfall in the country as a whole in July 2003, which is agriculturally very active, was 107% of the Long Period Average (LPA). The cumulative rainfall during the period from 1st June to 30th July 2003 was excess/normal in 32 out of 36 meteorological sub-divisions.